Part 4, "The Past in the Future," concludes with a chapter on how the Ukrainian conflict has influenced the historical narrative in Crimea and the Donbass, and in Ukraine and Russia as a whole.

By the end of the book, Walker has made two points very clear. First, he has shown how the propagation of specific historical episodes, such as the Great Patriotic War, leads to the deliberate forgetting of other events, such as the Soviet gulags and mass deportations. Second, he has successfully illustrated the interaction between Putin's memory politics and local remembrance, showing both the synchronization and dichotomies.

Walker's book strikes true with its diversity and richness of sources. He interviews post-Soviet citizens from all spheres of society, ranging from middle-aged military commanders in Donetsk to elderly women living in a town in the Russian tundra. By wielding a journalistic angle rather than an academic one, he paints a lively portrait of the plethora of characters playing a role in the formation of individual and collective memory within Putin's nation-building quest. Walker complements his interviews with sources such as Russian newspaper articles and Levada surveys.

Another strength is how clearly Walker spells out the complex interaction and interconnectedness of all actors, levels, and spheres of society surrounding memory. This relationship has been frequently emphasized by memory scholars but has rarely been captured more clearly. Throughout the chapters, he seamlessly charts the individual and collective remembrance and amnesia of the Soviet period, providing historical context and analyses of contemporary events. He masterfully uncovers the interaction between political, socioeconomic, and historical elements. Throughout this process, he smoothly alternates between the macro perspective of the official historical narrative and the micro perspective of grassroots individual memory and factchecking.

Walker successfully walks the fine line between apologetic and judgmental. He understands Russia on a deeper level and succeeds in capturing the complex and multifaceted character of the post-Soviet Russian Federation.

From an academic viewpoint, engagement with the academic debates surrounding memory and nation-building would have added extra value to Walker's broad collection of presented sources and allowed layman readers to contextualize the author's viewpoints and analyses.

The Long Hangover lends enriching insights in the hearts and minds of the Russian people and shows how the official narrative interacts with grassroots remembrance. The book illustrates how the Soviet past floods into the Russian present and how both collective and individual memory are fickle and frail shifting sands. Putin's attempt to sculpt these sands into his desired form is largely successful, but in this process he neglects dealing with the darker pages of the past. In the meantime, the past is weaponized during periods of conflict, and the population's remembrance proves both highly personal and politicized. This book leaves both experts and laypeople understanding Russia a little better than before.

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doi:10.1017/nps.2022.23

Nested Nationalism: Making and Unmaking Nations in the Soviet Caucasus, by Krista A. Goff, Ithaca [New York], Cornell University Press, 2021, 336 pp., $49.95 (hardcover), ISBN: 9781501753275; $32.99 (Ebook), ISBN: 9781501753299

In *Nested Nationalism: Making and Unmaking Nations in the Soviet Caucasus*, Krista Goff examines through the example of Soviet Azerbaijan the ways in which changing political priorities and relations between Moscow and titular elites created different opportunities for the recognition and

https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2022.38 Published online by Cambridge University Press
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national development of non-titular minorities (people who did not have republics named after them) in the Soviet Union. By shifting the focus from the all-Union level (where the non-Russian titular people were a minority) to the republic level (where the titular people formed the majority), Goff argues that despite the multi-ethnic goals and structure of the Soviet nationhood system, non-titular minorities often faced strong pressures and incentives to assimilate into the majority nation (here Azerbaijani *narod*) and that titular nationalism – "not Russian or Soviet colonialism" – is to blame for the discrimination and inequality experienced by the non-titular people (5). She identifies three periods in Soviet history as particularly opportune for the promotion of the native culture and cadres of non-titular minorities: the so-called Soviet "cultural revolution" during Stalin's First Five-Year Plan in the late 1920s and early 1930s (36–38), the political de-Stalinization during Khrushchev's period (Khrushchev's Thaw) (180–181), and Gorbachev's *glasnost* during the last period of Soviet rule (221). However, as she aptly points out, these periods did not present equal political opportunities for national development to all non-titular people in Soviet Azerbaijan. For instance, while the Persian-speaking Talyshes and Kurds faced assimilation by being removed from Soviet censuses since 1959 (136), Lezgins and Georgian-Ingilois maintained census and internal passport recognition and had also access to other forms of national cultural support during Khrushchev's Thaw in the early 1960s (180–181). A similar pattern is also observed in the case of Adjarans in Georgia and Pamiris in Tajikistan whose national categories were likewise eliminated from the census starting from 1959 (172). While these assimilationist practices were, of course, primarily ordered by Moscow, Goff emphasizes that "Moscow's role should not overshadow the agency" of nationalizing titular elites like İmam Mustafayev and Mirza İbragimov who justified it on the ground of socialist "ethnohistorical progress" (82). The author concludes by pointing out that the myth of the "voluntary" Talysh assimilation into the Azerbaijani nation persists to this day (176) and that this feeds into the master narrative of the current Baku leadership that "Azerbaijan is and always has been a model of tolerance" (15; 214; 283).

Methodologically innovative, empirically sound, and ultimately convincing, the book draws on a unique combination of archival research in five different former Soviet republics (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and the Russian Federation) and on more than 120 oral history interviews conducted over a period of 13 years (2007–2020) in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Russia, and the Netherlands (11). Furthermore, the author was very courageous in conducting research in an environment where minority issues constitute a politically sensitive topic and where there still exists "a popular refusal to acknowledge assimilatory and discriminatory practices" (220). As such, the historiographic contribution of this book is very important. Indeed, by re-visiting Soviet history through the perspective of non-titular minorities, Goff generates counternarratives to many of the defining "frameworks of Soviet nationality histories" (23). For instance, while many influential scholars argue that Stalin's drive for centralization and his attack on titular nationalism in the late 1920s/early 1930s impaired Soviet indigenization policies (*korenizatsiia*) in the titular republics, Goff contends that the opposite was the case for non-titular people since they were "first brought into *korenizatsiia*" exactly during this period (22–23). Equally important, viewing Soviet history through non-titular lens debunks the post-colonial narrative with which many non-Russian titular elites describe the Soviet experience, rendering all non-Russians equally victimized (5). Instead, as aptly noted by Goff, "For some nontitular minorities in Azerbaijan, the 'big brothers' that they most resented or distrusted were representatives of Soviet Azerbaijan rather than of Moscow" (219), since curtailing their national rights had an "overwhelmingly Azerbaijanifying effect, not a Russifying one" (23).

Despite these obvious strengths, a more substantive discussion of certain topics would have made the argument presented here more compelling. First, a more in-depth discussion of the reasons why non-titular minorities in Azerbaijan faced different opportunity structures for national development would have been of particular interest. Stated differently, why were some non-titular minorities more likely to be targeted with assimilation than others? To be sure, the author does

https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2022.38 Published online by Cambridge University Press

briefly mention that sensitive border minorities lacking neighboring Soviet kin republics (such as Talyshes and Kurds) were more likely to be targeted (181), however more space should have been devoted to this crucial issue. This within-case comparison could then have been complemented with a cross-national one as the author also touches upon the assimilation of Adjarans in Soviet Georgia and of Pamiris in Tajikistan (172–173). All this brings home the fact that often there is not a uniform state policy towards minorities. Indeed, the very same state can apply different ethnicity regimes to different minorities residing within its borders. Second, given the author's point that assimilation narratives in Azerbaijan persist to this day, and given the fact that the Russian Federation in itself has also moved in an assimilationist direction since the 1997 elimination of passport ethnicity, to what extent can we talk of a pattern of shifting from multi-ethnic to assimilationist regimes in post-Soviet countries? This is another related issue that deserves attention.

All in all, *Nested Nationalism* is an outstanding work providing a refreshing view of the "Affirmative Action Empire" from a hitherto overlooked perspective. It will be of interest primarily to historians and comparativists of ethnicity and nationalism and it is indispensable for understanding the current ethnic trajectories in the vast post-Soviet space.

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doi:10.1017/nps.2022.38

Mobilizing Uncertainty: Collective Identities and War in Abkazia, by Anastasia Shesterinina, Cornell University Press, 2021, 258 pp., $49.95 (hardcover), ISBN13: 9781501753763, ISBN10: 1501753762.

In *Mobilizing in Uncertainty,* Anastasia Shesterinina delves into the onset of the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict to explore the variations in Abkhaz reactions to this calamity. Based on eight months of fieldwork and some 180 in-depth interviews, Shesterinina frames the conflict as a case study to test existing theories of escalation and mobilization – based on relative deprivation, collective action and material rewards, and strategic interaction – and finds them wanting. In conditions of heightened uncertainty, she found considerations of personal risk absent from her respondents' accounts. And contrary to what one might expect based on conflict escalation theories, some who had played active roles in earlier confrontations went into hiding or fled when the war began with a concerted Georgian invasion in August 1992, while others with little previous activist experience now took up arms. Despite a shared trajectory of grievances and of intensifying confrontations, individual Abkhaz were faced with a range of choices – from hiding or fleeing to supporting or participating in the fighting – driven by motivations far more complex than simple assessments of self-interest, economic incentives, or security maximization. Shesterinina instead posits a socio-historical approach to understanding reactions under uncertainty as the war began. These are based on "collective threat framing" through which perceptions are constructed from collective memory and disseminated through social trust networks to structure people's understanding of what constitutes threat, towards whom threat is directed, and of who is most in need of protection from the threat. This framework seems indeed useful in making sense of the continuum of responses on the part of Abkhaz actors at the start of the conflict, during the course of the war, and in the wake of the hostilities. At the same time, the author's compelling narrative about this little-studied conflict, told primarily from the Abkhaz perspective, adds

https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2022.38 Published online by Cambridge University Press